

When Art Is in Your Blood

Mila Tenaglia (June 25, 2016)



For four generations Gloria Porcella's family has followed an artistic and cultural path in Rome. Here Gloria tells us a little about her cultured childhood, her subsequent career in Europe, and her decision to open the Ca' d'Oro Art Gallery—founded by her father Antonio—also in Miami and New York.

"When I was a little girl, my father, Antonio, often took me to Piazza di Spagna, to the home of Giorgio De Chirico, a rather unusual and eccentric man. I remember their long encounters in that beautiful house, the view of the piazza... That ancient Rome that once belonged to the great artists like De



Chirico and Guttuso doesn't exist anymore."

This passion for art has evolved in different ways over time, since each member of the Porcella family brought their own talent depending on the era in which they lived. Gloria's great grandfather, Alpinolo, was an artist and an important member of the Roman elite, while her grandfather, Amadore, was an historian and critic of 16th and 17th century art. In the 1970s her father, Antonio, opened the Ca' d'Oro gallery in Rome, a city that was then the center of the world – totally different from today. It was a Rome of a different social fabric, anchored to the art of the great and ancient masters of the past, not particularly well known for its contemporary art market.

Gloria, in turn, has taken her expertise beyond the Roman walls, offering it to an international audience by moving the gallery overseas and coming to the United States.

The Power of Public Art

"I remember when I studied the art of my homeland, Italy, in San Diego. It was an incredible experience and it shaped me as a person. But the greatest lessons about art and life came from my family; through the things that I saw and experienced, because really the most important thing in this craft is the eye. You must know how to choose, identify and recognize valid artists." Gloria's grit and passion have pushed her to carry out projects that she would once have never even dreamed about, and she tells us that she isn't afraid of anything anymore. As proof of the eclecticism and dynamism of her journey, just behind us there is a sculpture by Andrea Stanislav of a life-sized horse adorned with diamonds.

Yet her challenge is not just to bring artists from all around the world to her gallery, but to get sculptures especially outside into the open-air where "unlike at museums, people must have a reaction – be it positive or negative. I am a pioneer of public art, in 1997 I built a huge installation at Piazza di Spagna and everyone was very surprised."

Then, in the first few years of this millennium Gloria went international. She opened two galleries in eastern Berlin and was also involved in shows in Montecarlo that were inaugurated in the square by Prince Albert. And, in 2011, she organized the first biennial Festival of Sculpture in Rome ("but Roman politicians destroyed everything. It was disgraceful," she recalls with a tone of resignation).

To Miami, via Sicily

Also during this period Gloria took her first step towards Miami via Sicily. In 2009 she was an advisor for Minister Stefania Prestigiacomo and was commissioned to organize an installation show for the G8 Environment Ministers' Meeting in Ortigia, Siracusa. The symbol of G8 was a blue tortoise, and on that occasion the Minister had managed to renovate the Ortigia Castle and open it for foreign delegations. "I selected some artists, among which there was a group called Cracking Art, five Italians and a Belgian who create installations with recyclable and recycled plastic; they filled the castle with so many little blue tortoises, it was fantastic!"

That idea also turned out to be a good fit for Miami, where she had just opened a new branch of the Ca' d'Oro gallery. "I had never been to America but I told myself that I could do it, and so I did. In 2010 I filled Miami Beach with giant, fuchsia snails." She smiles, "even though I have brought so many projects and installations to Miami since then, I am still remembered there as the snail woman!"

New York, the new world capital of art

Today Ca' d'Oro is located in the heart of Chelsea, in one of the most important buildings for hosting art exhibitions. There it organizes different kinds of exhibits; from visual installations, to sculptures and paintings, to furniture made from recycled materials.

"All my clients who buy art in Miami are New Yorkers and for a long time I had wanted to dive into what is the new cradle of contemporary art. And what better place than New York, the center of the art world?" Compared to the Miami gallery, which is more focused on European and Italian artists, here in New York she wanted to reflect the cosmopolitan vision of the city by bringing artists from all over the world. "It wouldn't be fair to do exhibitions with only Italians! Yet Italian culture," Gloria is keen to stress, "has served me very well in my international experience and I owe this to my family and to their teachings."

One of the innovations introduced by her New York gallery sounds very Italian. Indeed Ca' d'Oro has a different system of opening that doesn't include the classic Thursdays, when you usually have so many people in attendance, but sometimes at the expense of quality. Ca' d'Oro does it on Wednesdays,



instead. “I make dinner in the gallery; I cook Italian dishes and I put out seats for about 35-36 people. The guests enjoy food, good company and works of art.”

We are left with the promise that the i-Italy team will come soon to savor some of her dishes and she gives us a small introduction to the next show in August. In a true summer tone, there will be a spectacular show by Alberto Lucarecchi—an exceptional photographer and one of the greatest shark biologists, living on a boat for 6 months per year. There will be photographs and the biggest shark in the world mummified... “If we manage to get it through the door...” says Gloria. But knowing her strength of will, we are sure they will manage it.

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